

JUL 16 1966

## In Search of Party Positions

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Since the latter part of June a series of well-drafted, workmanlike and, on the whole, rather unexciting papers has been flowing from the Republican party's headquarters in Washington to newspaper offices around the country. This is the fruit of a meeting June 27 of the Republican Coordinating Committee, which was set up as a vehicle for the discussion and development of national Republican policy while a Democratic President is in the White House.

The membership list of the Coordinating Committee is impressive. It is headed by former President Eisenhower. Next below him are listed the party's living former presidential nominees—Alf M. Landon, 1936; Thomas E. Dewey, 1944 and 1948; Richard M. Nixon, 1960, and Barry Goldwater, 1964—a list which serves as a stark reminder of Republican failures ranging from the disasters of 1936 and 1964 to the narrow loss in 1960.

Next come the Senate and House leaders, from Dirksen of Illinois to Goodell of New York. They are followed by five state governors—Love of Colorado, Smylie of Idaho, Romney of Michigan, Rockefeller of New York and Scranton of Pennsylvania, weighted toward the moderate-liberal side to about the same degree that the Senate-House leadership leans toward conservatism. Six members of the GOP national committee and a lone representative of the Republican State Legislators Association complete the list.

The gaps in political positions between Goldwater and Dewey, for example, or between Dirksen and Rockefeller, are so wide that it is difficult to imagine them agreeing on anything more than the word Republican. The membership brings to mind the old saying that a camel is an animal formed by a committee. This is a committee formed by an elephant.

The idea behind the formation of the Coordinating Committee was sound. A political party out of office—that is, out of the presidential office—needs a device to formulate and expostulate party positions, going beyond the day-to-day actions of its leaders in Congress. This is especially so now in the case of the Republican party, which was torn apart by the Goldwater campaign of 1964 and still is largely incoherent as to national

policy, because of the continuing struggle between its conservative and moderate wings.

If the Coordinating Committee may be judged by the papers it has issued during the past couple of weeks, and more particularly by the impact of these papers on public opinion and political debate, the results so far are unimpressive. To Republican moderates and progressives who had been especially interested in setting up the Coordinating Committee, the public impact must be disappointing, for the papers have received no more than routine attention. Party candidates may find them useful as reference works during their campaigns.

The general tone of the papers is that of the early years of the Eisenhower Administration; forward-looking and acknowledging the expanding role of the Federal Government in the nation but also stressing the role of private enterprise and the virtue of conservative financial management. The party statements on education, transportation, the antipoverty program, aid to the elderly, water management, housing and urban development, and the United Nations are soundly conceived, stressing a feet-on-the-ground approach but recognizing that the vast and growing problems of our urban-suburban communities require increasing Federal attention.

Republicans of the extreme right-wing will find little comfort in the pa-

pers. Democrats like President Johnson could indorse much of their content, putting aside some pointed criticism of Johnson Administration actions in the case of the antipoverty program and the United Nations.

Most of the subjects covered to date are not likely to be major issues in congressional contests although, as noted, Republican candidates may well find the papers useful in rounding out their own positions. But the Johnson Administration's antipoverty program is a lively issue, and the Republican paper criticized it with enthusiasm. (Robert Taft, Jr., who is trying to get back into Congress this year from a Cincinnati district, headed a task force which drew up this and other papers.) Thus it declared that the Republicans would have a poverty program which would be "a genuine war, a realistic crusade, and not a sham battle."

The Republican approach, it said, would be to "assist the poor and disadvantaged in their climb up the economic and social ladder; not to drag them up forcibly by a green rope of dollar bills." It found that Project Head Start was the most successful of the antipoverty efforts, and claimed that it was originally proposed by Republicans.

Candidates looking for campaign ammunition may skim through most of the papers, but they will do well to look carefully at the statement on poverty.